SECRET SECURITY INFORMATION

Syria
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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

May 15, 1953
Evening

SUBJECT : Syria

PLACE : Damascus

PARTICIPANTS: United States
The Secretary
Mr. Stassen
Mr. Byroade

Syria
General Shishakli

The principal points covered in a small evening meeting May 15, 1953 between Shishakli and the Secretary, in which Messrs Stassen and Byroade also were present, were as follows:

General Shishakli presented to the Secretary in a brief manner the familiar representation of the changing feeling about the Arab world for the United States and the reasons therefor. He traced the earlier feeling of friendship for the United States back through their desire to see the United States become the mandatory power rather than France or Britain in the Arab area. The theme ended with the statement that feeling of confidence among Arab peoples for the United States was now nearly lost because of our past support for Israel.

At the end of the above speech, Shishakli specifically made the point that the United States should not attempt to "impose" a settlement. While he wished for energetic action on the part of the United States, he did not want it to be without prior consultation and agreement with Arab leaders.

The Secretary outlined the general purpose of his trip, the philosophy of the new Eisenhower Administration which included a comparison of the United States and Soviet policies including those in the economic field.

Referring to a remark the Secretary had made about imperialism Shishakli stated his concern at what might be the motive of the Turkish Government in creating troubles along his northern frontier. The Secretary told Shishakli we would check into this when we arrive in Turkey.

In commenting

In commenting upon the Secretary's remarks about the overriding danger of Soviet Russia, Shishakli developed the theme that the communist menace and the menace of Israel both tied together in the end. His line of logic was that since Syria has to devote about fifty percent of its budget to military expenditures because of Israel, it was not in a position to improve living conditions of the people which were necessary to fight communism from within. He asked in this regard that the United States help Syria with grant military equipment to ease the burden. He promised that Syria would never attack Israel.

Shishakli also made the point that the United States should not deal with Syria through the French. The Secretary informed Shishakli he should have no reason for concern on this point.

The Secretary asked Shishakli whether he thought it wise to move for a total peace settlement in the area at this time. Shishakli replied that this was impossible, that there would have to be a series of steps taken to reduce tension before Arab leaders could contemplate a peace settlement. In response to a query from the Secretary as to the nature of these steps, Shishakli replied that they should be along the lines of the United Nations resolution.

The discussion broke up with the Secretary complimenting Shishakli upon the manner in which he had been able to keep conditions along his border with Israel fairly quiet.